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SUBJECT: FRANCE AND CUBA: RESPONSE TO REVIEW FOR SUSPENSION
OF TITLE III OF THE LIBERTAD ACT

REF: A. SECSTATE 48487
[1](#)B. PARIS 403
[1](#)C. 2008 PARIS POINT DECEMBER 17
[1](#)D. 2008 PARIS 2226
[1](#)E. 2008 BRUSSELS 1589

Classified By: Deputy Political Counselor Greg D,Elia for reasons 1.4 (B & D).

[1](#)1. (C) The following paragraphs are responses to the request for information on the relationship between France and the Cuban government and the implementation of Title III of the LIBERTAD Act (ref a):

[1](#)2. (C) Has the host country, in Post's opinion, worked to promote the advancement of democracy and human rights in Cuba?

-- Yes, the Government of France has continually encouraged Cuba to evolve peacefully toward a pluralist democracy while not always employing the same tactics as the United States. France critiques the human rights situation in Cuba and has continuously called on the GOC to release all political prisoners. France, however, does not support economic pressure (embargo, provisions with an extra-territorial scope) and, together with its partners in the European Union (EU), the GOF has voted since 1996 for a United Nations General Assembly (UNGA) resolution on the "necessity of ending the economic, commercial and financial blockades against Cuba." France favors developing a dialogue with the Cuban government to promote the achievement of tangible results in the area of public freedoms, but so far recognizes that this dialogue has not yet produced results.

[1](#)3. (C) Has the host country made public statements or undertaken other governmental actions, such as resolutions in the national assemblies condemning human rights abuses in Cuba; or actions in support of civil society in Cuba through host country's diplomatic missions or other fora?

-- France's ties with Cuba are consistent within the EU framework (joint position of December 1996, measures of June 5, 2003 revised on January 31 and June 13, 2005) promoting Cuba's transition to democracy and respect for human rights as a basis for political, economic and cultural exchanges. These issues were the focus of an October 11, 2005 meeting in Paris between former FM Douste-Blazy and then-Cuban FM Perez Roque. Because France continued to cosponsor a resolution on Cuba at the UN Human Rights Committee since 2003, bilateral relations deteriorated considerably during that time, resulting in a protocol freeze imposed on France's embassy in Havana that lasted through January 2005, as well as a cancellation of government cooperation programs. The GOF in February 2008 publicly praised Cuba for releasing four Cuban political prisoners (Pedro Pablo Alvarez Ramos, Omar Pernet Hernandez, Jose Gabriel Ramon Castillo and Alejandro Gonzales Raga) who all later received asylum in Spain. France also

called for Cuba to sign the UN covenant on civil and political rights and the UN pact on economic, social and cultural rights. French Foreign Minister Kouchner in 2008 urged the EU through the GAERC to set markers for a continued dialogue on human rights, to support the transition to democracy, and to cooperate in areas such as education and culture. The Foreign Minister has also undertaken behind the scenes approaches to facilitate the release of political prisoners in Cuba including interventions on behalf of Dr. Jose Luis Garcia Paneque, Nelson Alberto Aguiar Ramirez, Julio Cesar Galvez Rodriguez, Normando Hernandez Gonzalez, Librado Ricardo Linares Garcia, Omar Pernet Hernandez, Jose Gabriel Ramon Castillo, and Guido Sigler Amaya.

-- The main thrust of France's diplomatic efforts with Cuba, however, flows through the EU. For example, on June 23 and 24, 2008, the European Council -- not/not Commission -- agreed to pursue a comprehensive political dialogue with the Government of Cuba and to lift a number of already suspended "restrictive measures" imposed in 2003. The EU is also continuing its outreach to Cuba, which focuses formally on development, humanitarian, cultural, and economic issues. France, in its capacity as EU president, hosted an EU troika meeting on October 16, 2008 with then-Cuban Foreign Minister Perez Roque. In early September, Cuba accepted the EU's offer for dialogue. During the meeting, Foreign Minister Kouchner asked for the release at least of all remaining political prisoners in Cuba. FM Kouchner hosted Cuban FM Perez Roque on October 16 for talks that will continue the EU-Cuba political dialogue, begun in 2003, centered on human rights, democracy, and cultural and educational exchanges. The EU was represented by FM Kouchner, Czech FM Karel

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Schwartzberg, EC Commissioner for Development Louis Michel, and Pascual de la Parte on behalf of HR/SG Javier Solana.

-- On the bilateral front, President Sarkozy on February 25 named Socialist Party parliamentarian and former Culture Minister Jack Lang as French special envoy to Cuba. Lang's role, according to public statements by the French Ministry of Foreign Affairs and President Sarkozy, is to restart political dialogue and cooperation between the two countries.

14. (C) Have there been any high-level diplomatic visits between Cuba and the host country in the past six months?

-- In late February 2009, France sent Special Envoy Jack Lang to Havana for talks with Cuban officials (ref b and c). According to our sources at the French Ministry of Interior, Lang's main job is to work discreetly with the Castro regime to release all political prisoners in Cuba, and restore political and economic dialogue between France and Cuba, as well as to ensure the best interests of the EU are also considered (ref b and c). In its role as EU president, France hosted an EU troika meeting on October 16, 2008 with then-Cuban Foreign Minister Perez Roque to continue the EU-Cuba political dialogue, begun in 2003, which centers on human rights, democracy, and cultural and educational exchanges. The EU was represented by French Foreign Minister Kouchner, Czech Foreign Minister Karel Schwartzberg, European Commission Commissioner for Development Louis Michel, and Pascual de la Parte on behalf of HR/SG Javier Solana (ref d). French officials acknowledged that Havana had invited President Sarkozy to visit, but there were no such plans in the offing; neither would Paris host a Cuban Presidential visit (ref b).

15. (C) What is the nature of investments (and names, if known) that host country businesses have in Cuba?

-- According to December 2008 GOF figures, while approximately 60 French companies are active in Cuba, only 18 of them are established as joint ventures or branches and there are three hotel management contracts. According to

press reports, the French firm Altadis, which had an interest in the tobacco joint venture ICT with the Cuban firm CUBATOBACO, is in the process of being acquired by British Imperial Tobacco. French investment comes primarily from major groups and is concentrated in sectors such as tourism, construction, telecommunications, energy, agri-food and banking.

16. (C) Are there any bilateral trade agreements or other cooperative agreements between host country and Cuba?

-- Since 1999, Cuba has been nominally part of the Priority Solidarity Zone (PSZ) defined by France (inclusion in the PSZ gives access to large-scale development aid actions), but excluded from the benefits of the Zone for failure to make progress on the advancement of human rights and the promotion of democracy. As a result, the GOF claims it has been trying to maintain actions to assist the people of Cuba through channels such as NGOs, local authorities and universities. After the October 16, 2008 EU troika meeting with Cuba, however, European Commission Commissioner for Development and Humanitarian Aid, Louis Michel, and Cuban FM Perez Roque announced on October 24 the re-launching of EU-Cuba cooperation. The agreement, of which France is a partner through its membership in the EU, will include a new framework on environment, science and technology, trade, cultural exchanges and disaster preparedness. European Commission funding is slated to be between 20 and 25 million euros.

17. (C) Are there any exchange programs between host country and Cuba, including but not limited to: scholarships for host country nationals to study in Cuba; Cuban-paid medical travel for host country nationals; and Cuban doctors working in host country?

-- Since July 2003, intergovernmental cooperation has been frozen by Cuba as a result of conditions put in place by the 2003 EU framework. However, cultural actions, development, training, higher education and research projects implemented in the context of private partnerships are still ongoing. For example, French language teaching, initiated in the 1990s, has continued and French is the second-most taught foreign language in Cuba after English. Other exchanges currently permitted or in place are advanced training and research from West Indies-Guyana University and CIRAD (Center for International Cooperation in Agronomic Research).

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Cultural diversity programs, efforts to combat drug trafficking, money laundering, civil security (in terms of responding to natural disasters) and road safety are also permitted. According to GOF policies, police cooperation can occur as long as such exchanges do not affect Cuban citizens' freedom. Although it belongs to the PSZ, Cuba is no longer eligible for PSF (Priority Solidarity Funds), but it could set up Social Development Funds (Note: According to the GOF, a university partnership project presented by France was rejected by the GOC in November 2006. End Note).

PEKALA